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ABSTRACT

This study investigates whether there has been a shift away from the sex-typing of the managerial profession as masculine toward an androgynous ideal. One hundred ten graduate students with jobs in the business community and 575 undergraduate business students completed the Bem Sex-Role Inventory containing "masculine"--aggressive, makes decisions easily--and "feminine"--yielding, sensitive to the needs of others--characteristics for both themselves and a "good manager." Results did not indicate the expected shift. Instead, individuals of both sexes and levels of education and experience overwhelmingly preferred a masculine manager. Undergraduate women were most feminine and thereby saw effective managers as most unlike themselves, which may lead them to hold back in pursuing management as a career or to adapting themselves to masculine standards. According to respondents' views of good managers in general, women managers would be well advised to display traits and behavior typically associated with men. (Author)

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The "Good Manager": Masculine or Androgynous?[1]

by

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The "Good Manager": Masculine or Androgynous?

The purpose of this study was to investigate whether, in light of changing views toward traditional sex-role stereotypes and the growing demand for women as managers, there has been a shift away from sex-typing of the managerial profession as masculine.

Historically, sex-role stereotypes have powerfully influenced individuals' standards and evaluations of behavior (Broverman et al., 1972). In particular, the notion that men and masculine characteristics are more highly valued than women and feminine characteristics has been pervasive. Several studies (Rosenkrantz et al., 1968; Broverman et al., 1970, 1972) found agreement by males and females on the socially desirable characteristics of adults as masculine. Others found that performance by women is evaluated less favorably than the same performance by men (Goldberg, 1968; Pheterson et al., 1971). Basil (1973) discovered that personal attributes rated as highly important in upper management levels were also perceived as more likely to be found in men than women. Schein (1973, 1975) found agreement by male and female managers on a decidedly masculine profile of the successful manager.

Some evidence for change in individuals' adherence to sex-role stereotypes has recently appeared. Kravetz (1976) found a shift away from traditional stereotypes in the description of healthy adults by a sample of women and attributed the shift to the influence of the women's liberation movement in the 1970's. A similar shift may have occurred for men (Tavris, 1977). Change has also been occurring in our theoretical conception of sex-role stereotypes. In reviewing literature on the mas-

culinity-femininity (M-F) concept, Constantinople (1973) found considerable evidence for separate masculinity and femininity dimensions, possibly in addition to a bipolar M-F dimension, rather than strictly a bipolar M-F dimension as had been assumed without verification in most studies. Bem (1974, 1975) advocated the concept of androgyny, referring to a high propensity of both feminine and masculine characteristics in an individual, as representing a more flexible standard of psychological health than sex-typed behavior. She argued that 1) masculinity and femininity are complementary, not opposite, domains of traits and behaviors; 2) both are positive; 3) an individual of either sex may be both masculine and feminine, or instrumental and expressive, depending on the given situation; and 4) it is each individual's sex-role identity, not sex, which magnifies the degree to which certain traits and behaviors are manifested.

Underscoring the importance of the androgyny concept, an association between androgyny and more effective behavior was observed in a variety of non-organizational situations (Bem, 1975; Spence et al., 1975; Bem & Lenny, 1976; Heilbrun, 1976). Previous to the present study, the concept had not been applied to work settings. Its potential applicability was obvious: If the more effective person is androgynous, the more effective manager may be androgynous as well. A view of the androgynous manager as ideal would contradict the preference for a masculine manager previously reported (Schein, 1973, 1975).

The number of women in management positions has been increasing (Business Week, 1975), due to changes in cultural norms concerning the role of women and the impetus of federal legislation banning sex dis-

crimination at all levels in organizations. As more women become managers, it is possible that traditional masculine-oriented standards for managerial behavior are being replaced by androgynous standards. (On the other hand, it is also possible that new female managers adopt masculine traits and behaviors typical of male managers to succeed in a still-masculine working world.)

The present study was designed to explore the above speculations further. Specifically, it was hypothesized that the "good manager" is now perceived as androgynous in sex-role identification.

METHOD

Sample

Two groups of subjects which differed sharply in age, education, and work experience were used. One group consisted of 574 undergraduate business students attending courses in various universities, with a median age of 20.2 years and 70% male. The second group consisted of 110 part-time (evening) MBA students also attending courses, nearly all of whom also held full-time jobs; their median age was 26.8 years, and they were 82% male.

Procedure

Each individual completed the Bem Sex-Role Inventory (BSRI; Bem, 1974) both for him/herself and for a good manager during the first class of the course. It was introduced as an instrument intended to solicit views on management before they were influenced by the course and took

approximately 15 minutes to complete.

Instrument

The BSRI (Bem, 1974) contains 20 items characteristic of the masculine sex-role stereotype (e.g., self-reliant, defends own beliefs, ambitious), 20 items characteristic of the feminine sex-role stereotype (e.g., sympathetic, yielding, shy), and 20 items not associated exclusively with either stereotype (e.g., helpful, conscientious, conceited). Items are rated on a seven-point scale, ranging from "never or almost never true" (1) to "always or almost always true" (7).

Scoring of Instrument

Masculinity and femininity "self-scores" were calculated for each individual as the average of scores on the masculine and feminine items in his/her self-description. The median masculinity and femininity self-scores were then calculated for the entire sample combined, with graduate females, undergraduate females, and graduate males weighted more heavily than undergraduate males to equalize their numbers statistically as recommended by Bem and Watson (1976). Once the median masculinity and femininity self-scores were determined, individuals were classified as follows:

		Masculinity Self-Score	
		Below Median	Above Median
Femininity Self-Score	Above Median	Feminine	Androgynous
	Below Median	Undifferentiated	Masculine

This classification was called the individual's own sex-role group or "self-group."

Masculinity and femininity "ideal-scores" were calculated from each individual's description of a good manager using the same procedure as for the self-description. The good-manager description was classified as androgynous, masculine, feminine, or undifferentiated according to the median masculinity and femininity self-scores, i.e., the same medians as those used to classify individuals into self-groups. This classification was called the individual's "ideal group."

The decision not to establish the ideal-groups on the basis of the ideal-score medians is worthy of note. It was necessary for the purpose of the study to compare how individuals described a good manager and how they described themselves. Using the same set of medians for the creation of the self-groups and ideal-groups allowed this comparison to be made easily.

RESULTS

The hypothesis stated that individuals perceive a good manager to be androgynous in sex-role identification. Table 1a demonstrates overwhelming preference for a masculine manager instead, discounting the hypothesis. Over 65 percent of subjects in all four subsets of the sample ($p < .001$) characterized a good manager in strongly masculine terms. Less than 25 percent of subjects in any subset described a good manager in androgynous terms. Differences between ideal-group distributions by sex were insignificant for both part-time graduates and under-

graduates. Comparison with self-group distributions (Table 1b) showed that a higher proportion of individuals were classified into the masculine ideal-group than the masculine self-group and a lower proportion into the androgynous ideal-group than the androgynous self-group for all subsets of subjects. Despite differences in self-group distributions as indicated, the ideal-group distributions were remarkably similar in their support for a masculine manager.

Insert Table 1 about here

Inspection of the median self-scores used for creation of the ideal-group reveals further the resounding rejection of the hypothesis. After weighting due to unequal membership in the four subsets, the median masculinity and femininity self-scores were 5.09 and 4.69, respectively. Thus a subject who rated a good manager as higher on masculinity than femininity (e.g., masculinity ideal-score = 5.0, femininity ideal = 4.8) could have been placed in the feminine ideal-group rather than the masculine or androgynous ideal-group as the ideal score might appear to indicate. The significant membership in the masculine ideal-group despite this phenomenon emphasized the degree to which the hypothesis was rejected.

Analysis of ideal-scores and self-scores verified the above results. Ideal-scores were virtually the same for the four subsets of subjects (Table 2a) despite differences in self-scores, particularly between undergraduate males and females (Table 2b). Ideal scores were higher on masculinity and lower on femininity than self-scores for all subsets, with undergraduate females exhibiting the greatest differences

between self-scores and ideal-scores.

Insert Table 2 about here

In summary, a significant majority of individuals in each subset of the sample agreed on a predominantly masculine description of a good manager.

DISCUSSION

The two groups of subjects described a good manager as masculine in similar proportions despite considerable difference in their composition: one a younger, less-experienced, undergraduate student population and the other an older, more-experienced, full-time employee/part-time graduate student population. If changes in sex-role stereotypes were altering individuals' perceptions of a good manager as theorized, the impact would probably be greater among the younger group, with that group showing more of a preference for an androgynous manager than the older group; no such impact appeared in this study. If a growing number of women managers were affecting the perceptions as speculated, we might expect the impact to show more in the full-time working group than the full-time student group; either the workers in the sample had not experienced any change in numbers of women managers in their organization or this predicted effect was also non-existent. According to these results, an ethic that "masculine is best in management" continues to be upheld strongly.

The lack of difference in results between males and females in

both groups confirmed Schein's finding (1973, 1975) that sex of the evaluator is not a factor in determining requisite management characteristics. As in her studies, both sexes saw managers as appropriately masculine. A noteworthy finding for undergraduates also reported elsewhere (Hennig, 1971; Schein, 1975) was that females saw a good manager as more unlike themselves than did males. The long-run implication may be that either 1) these women hold back in developing their managerial skills and in seeking management positions or 2) they adapt themselves, as apparently had the graduate women in the study, to conform to masculine standards. Such behaviors on their part would continue to foster sex-role stereotypes which proclaim that men or masculine characteristics are more desirable in management.

Although results of this study did not support the hypothesis, further examination of the applicability of the androgyny concept to managerial practices may still be warranted. Osborn and Vicars (1976) suggested that results confirming sex-role stereotypes are more likely to be found in artificial, short-term, laboratory situations than in long-term, real-life, field settings. Evaluation of actual practices in light of the androgyny concept should indicate finally whether the concept has any value in explaining managerial effectiveness.

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TABLE 1

Ideal-Group and Self-Group Classified by Sex

	Undergraduate				Part-Time Graduate			
	Males		Females		Males		Females	
	n	Pct	n	Pct	n	Pct	n	Pct
a. Ideal-Group:								
Androgynous	66	16.3%[b]	31	18.2%[d]	19	21.1%	2	10.0%
Masculine	281	69.6[a]	113	66.5[a]	65	72.2[a]	16	80.0[a]
Feminine	4	1.0[b]	4	2.4[b]	2	2.2[b]	0	0.0[c]
Undifferentiated	53	13.1[b]	22	12.9[b]	4	4.5[b]	2	10.0
	404	100.0%	170	100.0%	90	100.0%	20	100.0%
	Chi-Square = 2.02 with 3 degrees of freedom (p = n.s.)				Chi-Square = 2.56 with 3 degrees of freedom (p = n.s.)			
b. Self-Group:								
Androgynous	88	21.8%	38	22.4%	25	27.8%	8	40.0%
Masculine	148	36.6[a]	15	8.8[b]	41	45.5[a]	3	15.0
Feminine	59	14.6[b]	80	47.1[a]	6	6.7[b]	4	20.0
Undifferentiated	109	27.0	37	21.7	18	20.0	5	25.0
	404	100.0%	170	100.0%	90	100.0%	20	100.0%
	Chi-Square = 85.93 with 3 degrees of freedom (p < .001)				Chi-Square = 8.03 with 3 degrees of freedom (p < .05)			

[a]Proportion larger than random, p < .001.
[b]Proportion smaller than random, p < .001.
[c]Proportion smaller than random, p < .01.
[d]Proportion smaller than random, p < .05.

TABLE 2

Ideal-Scores and Self-Scores Classified by Sex

	Undergraduate			Part-Time Graduates		
	Males (N=404)	Females (N=170)	F	Males (N=90)	Females (N=20)	F
a. Mean Ideal-Scores:						
Masculinity	5.62	5.60	.11	5.76	5.67	.67
Femininity	4.18	4.24	1.85	4.22	4.24	.04
b. Mean Self-Scores:						
Masculinity	5.21	4.73	67.90***	5.37	5.23	.90
Femininity	4.50	4.93	86.07***	4.46	4.65	2.44

***p < .001.